

Crawled Back to Life by AmeliaDarkholme

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Summary:

“Are you sure about this? Because you know there’s no going back.”

“Ask that to yourself, buddy. We both know that I don’t have much to live for. My career is practically in ruins. You, on the other hand, have a successful life and a pretty wife waiting at home.”

“A wife who deserves so much better than the life I gave her. It’s better like this. She’ll be much happier without me.”

“Alright! Let’s do this, then.”

“Together?”

“Nah, bitch. Race you to the other side!”

There was only one possible explanation for what had happened. After all, everyone knew how fucking stupidly reckless Bill and Richie were if they were left alone without supervision. And Stanley was so going to kill those two idiots if his theory was proven to be correct.

1. Castle Rock

Author's Note:

For those of you who read my other stories, I know. I should have finished those other stories first. But, unfortunately, I share the same short attention span as Richie, and the mini!Richie in my head kept on insisting that I SHOULD give him the happy ending he deserved. So yeah. I hope you guys like this story and please, leave a comment and tell me what do you think about this :D

“Are you sure about this? Because you know there’s no going back.”

“Ask that to yourself, buddy. We both know that I don’t have much to live for. My career is practically in ruins. You, on the other hand, have a successful life and a pretty wife waiting at home.”

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(It was dark and cold. He could hear his friends calling out names at that fucking clown. Taunting that sodding alien. He was in so much pain though. So much pain that in a way, he'd gone numb. He couldn't feel his body anymore. He knew he was drifting, fading, floating. He was leaving them, leaving him. But he didn't want to go. He really didn't want to. So, he clung to the leather jacket draped over his chest, and tried his best to hold on until he had no other choice.)

“Eddie? Eddie, the light’s red already. Eddie. Eddie, what’s the matter— *Eddie!*”

The loud honking snapped him back to the present as he quickly hit the brake before he could crash into the car in front of him, jerking forward hard enough for his seatbelt to press uncomfortably against his neck. There was a loud ringing in his ears as he slowly acknowledged his surrounding—the people yelling at him, the other cars honking at him, his heart beating faster than a race car, and *Beverly Marsh* sitting on the passenger seat beside him. It took Eddie awhile to realise that she too was yelling at him, except she sounded both worried and scared. He let out a shaky breath as he carefully steered his car toward the nearest spot he could find to stop, his jaw clenching tight enough that he thought it would break. Once he parked his car, he leaned his head on the wheel and finally answered his friend.

“I’m fine. Really, Bev. I mean, considering that I should be dead,” Eddie said, ignoring the way Beverly frowned at him. He quickly continued when he noticed her about to ask questions again. “Why are you here, by the way? Not that I’m not happy to see you. I really do. But, it’s just weird that you’re here with me now. Where is here anyway?”

Beverly eyed him for another moment before she replied. “We’re in

Castle Rock, remember? Stan got a phone call the other day, and now all of us are coming to see them in the local hospital.”

“Wait, *what?*” Eddie practically yelped. “What do you mean ‘Stan’? What phone call? And hospital? Why are we coming all way to a hospital in sodding Castle Rock of all places?”

For the umpteenth time that day, Beverly looked at him as if he’d grown four extra heads. But this time, she was looking at him not only with worry, but also *pity*. When she gently reached for his hand, Eddie had half a mind to yank his hand away because his ginger haired friend was only this gentle when there was something horrible happening. But he knew that if he did that, it would only make things worse. So he fought all his might to keep still, and waited for Beverly to speak. Instead of answering him, she said, “Eddie, honey, are you sure you’re alright? I know it’s been tough on you. It’s been tough on *everyone* this past year, but I know for you and Stan it’s been worse. I think you—“

Beverly’s words were cut off by the loud ring of Eddie’s phone. Giving the woman an apologetic look, he fished out his phone from his pocket and answered the call without looking at the screen, thinking that it was probably Myra demanding him to come home. Imagine his surprise when he didn’t hear his wife’s voice from the other line of the phone, but someone else instead. A voice of a man, someone he knew he had never heard before. But in the back of his mind, he told himself that he *did* know the voice. Even if it had been two decades years since he last heard it, and now that voice sounded a lot more mature than it was when they were teenagers.

“Eddie? Is this Eddie Kapsbrak’s phone?”

“Stan? Are you— is it really you?”

“Yes. It’s me.”

“*Holy fucking shit.*” Eddie could feel the familiar telltale of a panic attack was about to happen. His hand itched to reach for the inhaler that he knew wouldn’t be there. Beside him, he realised that Beverly was doing all she could to calm him down. He knew she meant well, but it felt *wrong*. Taking care of Eddie wasn’t Beverly’s job. It had never been. It was *Richie’s*. It had always been.

“Eddie, you there?” Stan voice came again. “Eddie, I need you to focus.”

Taking a few quick, calming breaths, Eddie nodded to himself before he spoke again. “Okay. I’m alright now. Sorry about that, Stan. It’s just...” He trailed off, not knowing how he was supposed to explain to Stan that the last thing Eddie heard of the man was that he’d *killed* himself. But just before Eddie could decide on what to say, Stan beat him to it.

“Eddie. Eddie. Eddie, I know. *I know.*”

“Y-you do? I mean, do you remember—“

“*Dying?* Cutting both of my wrists as I lay in my bathtub? Yeah.”

“Fucking hell.” Eddie pinched the bridge of his nose, feeling drained all of the sudden. He vaguely registered Ben badgering Stanley in the background, and he knew that they’d need to talk about it face to face. *All of them.*

“What did Bev tell you so far?” Stanley asked after he managed to shush Ben.

“That we’re going to a hospital in Castle Rock? She hasn’t told us who we’re going to see though. But we’re almost there, I think.”

There was a beat of silence before Stan spoke again, this time his voice sounded strained. “*Ah.* I see. So she hasn’t really told you anything then. And you haven’t remembered it yet.”

“What do you mean? What did Ben tell you? And what am I supposed to remember? Is Mike with you too? And Richie? Bill? Where are you, by the way? Are you headed there too? To the hospital?”

“We’re already in the hospital. Just...just get here as soon as possible, Eddie.”

“Stanley—“

“And ask Bev about Richie and Bill.”

Stanley hung up before Eddie could say anything thing. It was

probably the weirdest call Eddie had ever gotten. Second only to that call from Mike when he asked them to go back to Derry.

Speaking of Derry...

“Beverly?”

“Yes, Eddie?”

“Who are we going to visit in that hospital?”

Again, there was that look of profound pity on Beverly’s face as she went to hold Eddie’s free-hand. Right then and there, Eddie knew that something was wrong. He knew right away that he wouldn’t like the answer that Beverly was going to give. He knew that whatever she was going to say would answer the question Stanley asked him to ask. The seventeen seconds Beverly took to answer him felt like seventeen hours instead. And yes, Eddie counted them.

“It’s Richie and Bill.”

According to Ben, it had been a year.

A year of things he apparently had done, yet never remembered actually doing.

A year that Stanley tried so hard to understand.

("I'm sorry, Bill.")

Stanley remembered clearly how he cut his wrists because he thought by taking himself out of the equation, he could save his best friends. He could feel his life leaving his body at the same time blood profusely ran down his arms. He knew he'd died then. He was sure of that. He remembered feeling incredibly terrified at the thought of dying, yet there was a sense of calmness as well. He remembered having *Bill Denbrough* as his last coherent thought before he crossed to the Other Side. But, then he felt a hand clasped on his shoulder, jerking him back into focus. He didn't find himself in his bathtub though. He didn't even think he was still in his house. He blinked his eyes a couple times before he realised that the man staring at him in worry was an all grown up, and *much* slimmer Ben Hanscom. Standing not far from them, Stanley recognised that the incredibly tall man who was talking seriously to who appeared to be a doctor was none other than Mike Hanlon. To say that Stan was confused would be an understatement of the century. He had no idea how he could have moved from *dying* in his bathtub in his home, to sitting tensely in a chair in a place that he knew could only be a hospital.

He didn't need to ask what was wrong though, because he caught two names that slipped Mike's lips as he spoke to the doctor.

Bill Denbrough.

Richie Tozier.

The weirdest thing happened then. He was attacked by an onslaught of memories filling his brain, and it wasn't exactly a fun experience. All those memories were playing so fast in his mind, and it hurt his head when he tried to process them. He could see himself from the day he beat IT with his friends, to that day when he moved out of Derry. He saw all the years he spent lonely and hollow because he'd forgotten his childhood, wondering every night with tears in his eyes what was wrong with him. He remembered the constant ache in his heart that he always felt until the day he met Patty. When he saw himself in his bathtub, his cut wrists bleeding, there was a chill running down his spine. But if he thought that was the end of it, he was wrong.

Out of the blue, he had memories of waking up in that same bathtub, the water in it curiously clear of the blood that was supposed to taint it the same way his wrists were free of the cuts he was sure he'd put there. He had memories of going to Derry the next day, his whole being thrummed with both dread and adrenaline at the thought of battling IT again, only to find out that Derry had changed because the clown had been defeated somehow. He had memories of going to the Jade Orient anyway, reuniting with his friends even though every single one of them knew that two of their most prominent members weren't there. He had memories of watching the TV the week after he'd returned to Georgia, and saw the familiar faces of Bill Denbrough and Richie Tozier reported as missing persons by Bill's wife and Richie's manager.

He had memories of calling Eddie in the middle of the night, both of them agreeing to do whatever they could to find their two friends.

He had memories of his marriage slowly deteriorating because he was too focused on finding Bill and Richie, and found out awhile later that Eddie was going to divorce his own wife.

He had memories of finally divorcing Patty, because he *finally* could admit, at least to himself, the immense love he felt for Bill.

He had memories of admitting it to Eddie before anyone else, who he knew was the only person who could understand what he was feeling.

He had memories of the past year that he and Eddie spent doing everything to find Bill and Richie, even though he was sure that he had *never* done it.

Once Stanley managed to get a grip on himself, he noticed that Mike was coming toward him and Ben. Stanley kept his mouth shut as he listened to Mike, who told them that a young woman named Diane Torrance was the one who identified Bill because she was a big fan of his. Diane then contacted Bill's wife Audra, who was kind enough to contact Richie's manager James because Diane told her that Bill was found unconscious in the woods in Castle Rock with a man who fit Richie's descriptions. Once Audra and James confirmed that it really was Bill and Richie, the both of them contacted the Losers. Audra and James told them that if Diane hadn't identified Bill two months after he was found, he and Richie would have spent the rest of their lives in that hospital without their identities because they had never woken up, no matter what the doctors did.

He couldn't really remember it happening, but when the phone call came, Stanley remembered that he had gone with Ben and Mike to get more information on their missing friends, while Beverly had gone with Eddie. They dropped everything they were doing before they bought the first flight to Castle Rock, rented a car and headed straight to the hospital from the airport. He could only remember half of the drive to Castle Rock before his memories came up with blank, just absolutely nothing. Then the next thing he knew, he'd

found himself in the hospital, sitting with a worried Ben beside him while Mike, always the calmest one between the seven of them, asked the doctor to tell him everything.

Stanley ignored the way Ben was looking at him in that familiar worried way he always did, and quickly asked Ben the day's date. It caught Ben off guard, naturally. If Stanley didn't have more pressing issue in his mind, he would have understood the look of absolute confusion on Ben's face. But he *didn't* have that kind of patience. Since the disappearance of Bill and Richie, he and Eddie had come to rely on one another. He *needed* to call Eddie to talk to him about his weird trance that took him down some memory lane he was *sure* he had never experienced. He needed to call Eddie, lest he'd freak out so bad, it would be ugly. So, Stanley asked Ben one more time about the day's date, more urgently this time. When Ben finally answered him, Stanley quickly called Eddie's phone. The moment he heard the complete shock in Eddie's voice once he realised who had called him, Stanley knew that he wasn't alone. He knew that Eddie was experiencing the same bullshit that Stanley was experiencing. It gave him some sick kind of relief before he realised what that meant.

"We both *died*," Stanley muttered under his breath after he hung up the call.

"I'm sorry but *what*?" Ben asked, obviously he'd overheard what Stanley had said.

But once again, Stanley ignored him as his mind slowly started to figure things out. He knew right away that the only reason he had memories of things that he was sure he'd never done was because he'd died when he cut his wrists, and somehow had come back to life again. That would mean, if Eddie was dealing with the same thing as he did, then his hypochondriac best friend had *also* died then in the

alternate universe that Stanley was more familiar with. Another similarity they both had was the disappearance of the Losers they were most fond of—the Losers that both Stanley and Eddie had always harboured feelings for since they were just kids. Stanley knew, right then and there, it was no coincidence that Bill's and Richie's disappearance happened around the same time Mike called all of them to return to Derry. There was only one possible explanation for what had happened.

After all, everyone knew how fucking *stupidly reckless* Bill and Richie were if they were left alone without supervision.

And Stanley was so going to kill those two idiots if his theory was proven to be correct.

“So, remind me again what are we supposed to do?”

“Fucking hell, man! We’ve discussed this countless times already—”

“Alright, alright! Calm the fuck down, alright? I just wanted to make sure one last time. Can’t afford making any mistakes, can we? In case you forgot, it’s not our lives at stakes here.”

A beat, then, “Well, we read the spell, jump into this fucking hole and go back to a year ago, kill Pennywise before Mike could call us, and then that’s it.”

“And everything will be the way it’s supposed to be again.”

“Yes. That’s right.”

Silence fell once more as the two men stood side by side, eyeing the big hole in front of them. Even after a year, they could still feel the malicious aura coming from the hole where their biggest nightmare used to reside in. They had no idea how long had passed—whether it had been minutes or hours or fuck, maybe days. But then the shorter one between the two of them spoke, and this time it was him who broke the silence with what the taller one considered as an incredibly stupid question.

“Are you sure about this? Because you know there’s no going back.”

“Ask that to yourself, buddy. We both know that I don’t have much to live for. My career is practically in ruins. You, on the other hand, have a successful life and a pretty wife waiting at home.”

“A wife who deserves so much better than the life I gave her. It’s better like this. She’ll be much happier without me.”

“Alright! Let’s do this, then.”

“Together?”

“Nah, bitch. Race you to the other side!”

2. Jackie

Summary for the Chapter:

“Excuse me but who the fuck are you? Why the fuck would we need your help?”

“Because if anyone knows all the crazy things that happen here in Castle Rock, that would be me. Diane Torrance at your service, gentlemen. But please, call me Jackie.”

Notes for the Chapter:

In case you haven't noticed yet, this story is not only an alternate universe of IT, but also a crossover with Castle Rock. I love Castle Rock sooo much. I really do. And I'm a bit (nah, more like immensely) disappointed that this season's story doesn't continue the previous one. But oh well. We can't always get what we want. I suppose I'll just have to satisfy myself with writing this story :D Anyway, enough with the little bit of rant. Hope you guys like this chapter! :)

“Knew I'd find you here.”

“Hello to you too, buddy! Dougie! Bring me another bottle for my best friend here!”

“Don't you think you've had enough? You know you'd get alcohol poisoning at this point.”

“What if I tell you that's what I'm headed for? Maybe Netflix would be interested in me again once I'm six feet under. Make a fucking biopic series about me or something.”

“Hate to break it to you, man; but I don’t think you’re that popular.”

“Fuck, you’re right... Well, what brings you here? Gonna lecture me like the others do? How’s the wife, by the way? She was fucking gorgeous at the Oscars, by the way.”

“The wife’s alright. And I’m not here to lecture you. I promise.”

“Then what the fuck you’re doing here? No offense, but I really don’t want your company.”

“Understandable, but I’m not here to join you drinking yourself into a stupor. I’m here to ask for your help. Help me change everything. To make it all better again.”

There was a loud crash as the glass of vodka fell. “Buggering shit– what do you mean?”

“I found it. I found away to bring them back.”

No one ever realised it, but grown-Eddie wasn’t the shortest one between the six Losers male. It was actually Bill, who ironically used to be the second tallest after Stanley. Sure, 5’9 wasn’t exactly tall compared to the giants that were Mike, Richie and Ben—exactly in that order. Hell, even Stanley, who was the fourth tallest after the three giants, felt like he was much too tall for Eddie sometimes. But the point was that Eddie *wasn’t* the smallest one anymore. Fucking Richie, though, he just had to make that comment about fitting Eddie into an oven because he was *small*, and that title just seemed to stick ever since then.

Since they were kids though, no matter the fact who was taller or shorter, both Richie and Bill had always had an enigmatic presence to

them. Bill might be their leader, but everyone knew that it was Richie who would spark most of Bill's ideas. Everyone knew that although Stanley was Richie's oldest friend since they were practically in diapers, and Bill was Eddie's first friend when he first moved to Derry after his father's death, the duo that was Richie and Bill were a force to be reckoned with. Even with their reputation as Losers, Eddie remembered a time when people finally noticed Richie and Bill; when boys invited them to their parties, and girls giggled a little too sweetly at them. For Eddie, as boys or as men, Richie and Bill were larger than life. He could never imagine himself navigating the world with the level of confidence that Richie and Bill demonstrated. If he recalled properly, he wasn't the only who used to watch his two friends with a dumbstruck look on his face. Every single one of the Losers was always a bit dumbstruck whenever they were around Richie and Bill.

It was why, the sight of Richie and Bill lying unconscious on their beds, looking frail and vulnerable and *small*, was very unsettling for him.

"It'd be just like them to do something so monumentally *stupid*," Stanley said as he took the seat next to Eddie. "Can't trust them with themselves, really."

"Well," Eddie began, feeling a small grin tugging at his lips despite the situation. "Everyone and their mother know that Richie and Bill are the dumbest geniuses Derry has ever known."

From the corner of his eyes, Eddie saw Stanley rolled his eyes, but he could also see how he was fighting back his own grin. "That is true, unfortunately. It's funny how geniuses like those share *half* a brain cell between the two of them, and most of the time they use it to execute whatever idiotic plans they have cooked up with."

They shared a small chuckle then, but it didn't last long before they fell quiet. After Beverly filled in on him about everything the whole ride to the hospital, it didn't take Eddie long to come to the same conclusion as Stanley did. He didn't want to believe it though. Because, if he were correct, Eddie didn't think he could live with himself. The idea that Richie and Bill would something like... Eddie just couldn't bear the thought. When he finally arrived at the hospital, the first thing he did was to look for Stanley, searching his face for something—*anything*, that would prove Eddie's fears to be wrong. But the normally stoic Loser looked like he was doing all he could to stop himself from freaking out, and that was when Eddie knew.

Somehow, Richie and Bill managed to find a way to bring Eddie and Stanley back at the cost of their fucking own lives. Those selfless bastards.

It went without saying that, after they were allowed to, Eddie went to see Richie first while Stanley went to see Bill. A part of Eddie wished that they had been roomed in the same room, so he and Stanley didn't have to go all on their own. But the other part of him was glad about it because separate rooms meant they got to have the *best* treatment the hospital could possibly offer. Eddie was still nervous about going alone though, and he knew Stanley felt the same way. Even though he couldn't really remember it, he could feel how he'd come to rely on Stanley in the year since Richie and Bill supposedly went missing. Therefore, when Beverly offered to go with him and Mike to go with Stanley, Eddie was grateful for it. He was so grateful that Beverly was there with him because, when he finally saw Richie, Eddie knew he would have lost it.

Growing up, Richie had always been a pale kid. Eddie could still remember all the time he spent gazing at Richie's flawless skin,

always berating himself when he realised he'd leaned closer to be able to count the freckles on his gangly friend's cheeks. The grown up Richie in his original memory had filled out nicely to accommodate his ridiculous height, especially around the shoulders because Eddie remembered catching himself countless times thinking how broad those shoulders were. He also wasn't as pale as the boy that he was, but he was definitely a few shades lighter than Eddie. However, the Richie that was lying on that bed, his curly-hair now cut close to his scalp, was *nothing* like the best friend he remembered. Nothing like the boy he'd loved through out his childhood, nothing like the man he'd fallen in love with again for the second time.

Eddie didn't notice it before, but when he looked at the hideous scar that marred the left side of Richie's face, that was when he finally acknowledged that his own face was free of the scar where Bowers had stabbed him with a knife. With absolute terror, he realised that by bringing him back, Richie had also transferred all of the battle wounds that Eddie had suffered to himself. His eyes never left Richie's bandaged torso as his hand flew to his chest, where he remembered Pennywise's claw had spiked him through. When he could only find the smooth skin of his chest, he was suddenly overwhelmed by the wave of dread and panic, so powerful he lost all the strength in him. He would have fallen over if it weren't for Beverly's quick hands that prevented his fall.

He didn't have to scramble out of the room to know that Stanley had seen the cut wrists on Bill that Eddie knew would be there. He could hear Stanley's anguished cry, and Mike's voice trying to calm him down. He could hear Stanley crying out for his name, which prompted Eddie to rush out of the room to meet him. For most of the time during the year they spent together to find Richie and Bill, Stanley had always been the stronger one between the two of them. The one who was always calm and had a good head on his shoulders despite everything that happened. But as Eddie held Stanley in his arms, allowing the taller man to sob his heart out on the crook of Eddie's neck, he knew that Stanley was finally at his breaking point. So, Eddie held on to him and cried with him, because that was all

they could do, really.

(“It’s my fault,” Stanley had cried then. “It’s all my fault, Eddie. It’s my fault that he’s lying there on that bed, with that fucking cut on his wrists. It’s my fucking fault.”)

(“I know, Stan. I get it. I understand,” Eddie had said in return, feeling his own tears dropping profusely as his mind went back to what he’d seen in that room, saw how Richie was. “I really do, Stan.”)

“I want to be mad at them, you know,” Stanley whispered, snapping Eddie back to the present. “I *am* mad at them. But, I kind of understand why they did what they did. We did go through the same thing they went through.”

“Except we always had the hope that we’d find them,” Eddie countered with a small voice, lying his head on his best friend’s shoulder as his exhaustion overwhelmed him. “And we did find them in the end. We *died*, Stan. They’d lost us. I could only imagine how horrible it had been for them. Especially for Richie...”

Eddie trailed off then, his voice caught in his throat as he pictured how Richie’s life had been after Eddie’s supposed death. Richie had no one in his life, not after his parents died years before he even became famous. Bill no longer had parents himself, but at least he still had Audra in his life, and he wasn’t as emotionally stunted as Richie was. Bill’s career was also much steadier than Richie’s, who completely butchered his last show. It was also no secret that Richie had problems with substance and drug abuse, something that he’d struggled with since their teenage years because of his ADHD and his parents’ neglect. Eddie could see it clearly in his mind; Richie slowly but surely spiraling into depression, drowning himself in alcohol and condemning his life with drugs as the successful life he’d

painstakingly built for himself crumbled. If it were the other way around, and Eddie was in Richie's shoes, he doubted that he'd last even a day.

"Do you remember what the doctor said?" Stanley asked, in an obvious to change the subject. "She said that when they were found, their wounds looked pretty fresh."

Eddie nodded, clearing his throat before he spoke. "Yeah, and yet they'd disappeared for a year."

"A year that we spent scouring practically the whole country from them. But no one could find them, not until that girl called Audra and Tom."

"With fresh wounds that we *should* have suffered from a year."

The both of them fell silent again for the second time as they processed the whole thing. This time, it was Eddie who broke that silence. "Stanley, do you think it's possible that for Richie and Bill, it's been both a year *and* a few days? Like it is for us?"

The look of utmost concentration on Stanley's face brought a sense of familiarity that was oddly comforting to Eddie's nerves. "We've fought a killer clown from space, Eddie. Pretty sure that *anything* is possible at this point."

"Alternate timeline is another thing, though," Eddie said with a small

frown. “We’re talking about someone going *back* in time to change things around in hopes for a better outcome.”

“I suppose that’s the general idea of alternate timeline, yes,” Stanley drawled in his usual sarcastic and condescending way. Even though it annoyed him, Eddie found that he was glad to hear it. But if there was anything Eddie and Stanley had in common, it was their stubbornness to accept things without debating the logic first.

“Sounds like something straight from Richie’s comic books. Remember when he used to rant about all the alternate universes in his stupid comics?”

“What’s your point then?”

“I think that’s *a bit* too far fetched to believe. There’s also a question of *how* Richie and Bill could find a way to do that.”

“We’ve established since a long time ago that they’re geniuses. If anyone could find it, it’d be them.”

“Have you ever heard about time travel though? A case of time travel that is successful? Because I sure don’t.”

“Eddie, what’s so different about this for you to believe? In my opinion, it’s just as bizarre as the idea of getting murdered by a manipulative, murderous alien.”

“Well—“

“*Well*, I don’t know about manipulative, murderous alien, but I kind of believe in alternate timeline.”

In unison, Eddie and Stanley whipped their heads around toward the person who just spoke. They found a blonde young woman, probably about a decade younger than them, who had a grin that made her look even younger. The way she looked at Eddie and Stanley made the shorter Loser fidgeted in his seat, uncomfortable with the poorly concealed giddy in her eyes. Her sudden appearance also caught Eddie off his guard, and it sparked up his wariness into an alarming level. Always the one who was far more in control of his emotions, Stanley immediately gave the blonde a polite smile as he gave her his attention.

“Hello,” Stanley said. “How can we help you?”

“Nah,” the blonde said, shaking her head as a grin made appearance on her face. “It’s *you* who need *my* help. Heard about the timeline thing, figured I could help.”

Eddie instantly decided that he didn’t like her.

“Excuse me but who the *fuck* are you?” Eddie snapped, his patience already wearing thin. “Why the fuck would we need your help?”

“Because if anyone knows all the crazy things that happen here in Castle Rock, that would be me,” she replied lightly, completely unbothered by Eddie’s rudeness as she sat on Eddie’s other side. She gave out her hand to Stanley, who took it with a gentle quirk of his eyebrow. “Diane Torrance at your service, gentlemen. But please, call me Jackie.”

Stanley blinked as realisation slowly dawned on him, his mind supplied him with the information needed regarding the blonde’s name.

“You’re the one who found Bill and Richie,” he said slowly, feeling Eddie tensing beside him. “The one who called Audra and James.”

“Yep,” the blonde said, popping the p. “Found your boyfriends in the woods at around 5PM, both of them bleeding to death. Especially the tall one. He was terribly injured, blood pouring out from his chest like water from a tap. Didn’t realise he was the comedian though. Denbrough, however, he was easier to recognise. So, I quickly called the ambulance, and then the beautiful Mrs Denbrough. Where is she, by the way? I still want to have her autograph. That would be so cool.”

Stanley ignored her use of ‘boyfriends’ when he decided that he would answer her question. “Audra’s staying at a motel. Seeing Bill’s condition shocked her, so she asked me to wait on him while she went for a much needed break.”

“Pfft. A much needed break,” Eddie muttered, his face twisting in barely concealed dislike. The Losers all knew that for some reason, Eddie had never really liked Audra. He’d always preferred Patty, and was actually rather disappointed when Stanley told him they were

separating.

And apparently, judging by the way Jackie frowned, she agreed with Eddie. She wisely kept her opinion to herself though, and went to continue with her story.

“Right. On with the story. Where was I again? Oh yes, so when the ambulance came, I told them that one of them was Bill Denbrough, and that I’d called his wife. You know what, I didn’t really think it was actually *the* Audra Phillips number at first. I mean, I saw the news and all, saw that the contact number registered was hers. But I didn’t think it *would* be her. I bet she got like, *billions* of phone calls every day, claiming to have found her husband. I was actually surprised that she’d answered my call. It was pretty cool of her.”

“Jesus, it’s like talking to Richie,” Eddie moaned as he pinched the bridge of his nose. Stanley couldn’t help the grin that escaped him. This was the first time Eddie could talk about Richie without going all depressed and broken. The shorter Loser didn’t seem to realise it though, because he’d focused his whole attention on Jackie, a familiar annoyed look on his face. “Can you just...fucking get to your point, kid? You told us you knew things about timeline.”

If Jackie was offended, she did a great job hiding it. Shrugging, she said, “Fine. After Audra answered me, and after I told her that I’d found her husband bleeding from the cut on his wrists in a forest with a mysterious who was also dying, she asked me to describe the other man. Then she told me that it could be Richie Tozier, who turned out to be her husband’s best friend who was also missing. And then she said that she’d come as soon as possible with Richie’s manager to confirm both Bill’s and Richie’s identity.”

“What were you doing in the woods, by the way? Don’t young girls like you have parties to attend?” Eddie asked. For the first time, Jackie’s grin disappeared as she scowled at Eddie.

“I’m twenty-*fucking*-seven years old. I’m too old for stupid parties,” she said coolly. “And if I hadn’t been in the woods that day, your boyfriends would have been dead, old man.”

“Would you *stop* calling them our boyfriends?” Stanley said quietly, looking around frantically for fear that Audra would be there, even though he knew that she was probably asleep in her motel room.

“Why?” Jackie shot in return, her grin slowly making an appearance again. “Isn’t that what they are for the both of you? The nurses told me *everything*. After the police allowed me to return here once I gave them my statements, they told me how hysterical the two of you were after you saw your boyfriends’ condition. And don’t you dare giving me that bullshit about you two being their best friends. Your other best friends didn’t react the same way as you did.”

“Bill is married to Audra, remember?”

“There’s a thing called an affair, *remember*? And besides, everyone has always speculated that the Trashmouth doesn’t actually have a girlfriend. The list of celebrities he’s been rumoured with is as legendary as his wild parties, but he’s never specified which one of them is the girlfriend he’s mentioned countless times in his jokes. If you ask me, I’ve always thought that he’s at least bisexual.”

“When Richie finally wakes up, I’m going to sic him on you,” Eddie

spat, jaw clenching in annoyance as he crossed his arms across his chest. “You try out-talking that fucking Trashmouth. See whether you’d talk just as much when you’re up against him.”

Jackie crossed her own arms mockingly as she gave Eddie an infuriating smirk. “Damn, grandpa; you’re so fucking grumpy. Do you really need that Tozier dick so bad?”

Eddie’s straightened up in his seat, eyes lit up in anger. “You fucking insolent bi—“

“Tell us what you know about the timeline,” Stanley said quickly, before Eddie could explode and say something they all would regret. “You did say you could help us with it, Miss Torrance.”

The blonde sobered up instantly at the reminder. “Yeah, I did say that, I suppose... Well, if you’re okay with leaving your boyfri—“

“For fuck’s sake!”

*“Alright, alright! Christ, calm the fuck down, will you? If you’re okay with leaving your *best friends* for awhile, I want you to come to my house. I’m a bit of a writer myself, you know? And I did some extensive research for my own story. I can show you about it.”*

Stanley and Eddie shared a look right then, although it was Eddie who uttered out their hesitation. “How do we know for sure that you can be trusted? We’ve only met. You could be a serial killer for all we

know.”

Jackie looked both annoyed. “Although I’m flattered that you considered me to have hidden, murderous skills, I’m afraid I have to disappoint you and say that I’m as dangerous as a duck.”

“Infuriated ducks are lethal as fuck, you know,” Eddie quipped.

“And you would know, wouldn’t you?” Jackie snapped, rolling his eyes. “You and your fancy suit.”

“God, give me the strength,” Stanley muttered under his breath. Heaving deeply, he finally made a decision. “Okay, we’ll come with you, Miss Torrance. But you better be telling us the truth. We’re really not in the mood for games.”

“Deal,” Jackie agreed instantly, looking almost child-like when she beamed at him. She pushed herself onto her feet, clapping her hands in excitement. “Come on, then. I have a feeling that the sooner we do this, the sooner your best friends will wake up. Don’t ask me how I know this. I can’t really explain it. Let’s just say I have an experience with freaky stuffs.”

“That’s something we can relate with,” Stanley replied, sharing another wordless look with Eddie as they followed the blonde.

“Oh yeah, the manipulative alien! What’s up with that? How did you guys find it? Do you mind if we talk about that too? I think it’s going

to be good for the book I'm writing."

"We'll see about that, kid," Eddie said. When they finally reached Jackie's car, which was actually a beat up taxi, Eddie had the same horrified look on his face as that time Richie showed them his own beat up car back when they were seventeen.

Once again, Stanley found himself sharing a look with Eddie, both of them thinking of how *well* Richie would get along with Jackie.

"By the way," Jackie said once all of them had gotten into her car. "I never really caught your names. If anyone should be worried about getting murdered, it should be me."

"Yeah, we'll fucking cut you into pieces then stuff you in the trunk of this fucking death trap," Eddie replied in a monotonous drawl. "How's that for a story, kid?"

"Pretty awesome," Jackie said, nodding her head in approval. "So, what are your names? I can't possibly call you Bill's boyfriend *and* Richie's boyfriend forever."

"I'm Stanley Uris, and this is Eddie Kaspbrak," Stanley said as he sent a quick text to the rest of the Losers about where and Eddie were going. "And seriously, if you don't quit it with the boyfriend joke, I'll seriously consider joining Eddie on killing you. Believe me when I say that no one would be able to find your body."

Jackie let out a giggle that sounded far too *familiar* for Stanley and Eddie to be comfortable with, giving the two Losers a cheeky wink from the rear-view mirror. “Fair enough, Mr Uris. Just so you know, you’re far scarier than Mr Grumpy Pants over there.”

“Why, thank you, Miss Torrance,” Stanley said flatly, even though he couldn’t stop the small smile that tugged on his lips. She really did remind him of Richie. Although there was a distinct lack of awful mum jokes.

“You’re welcome,” the blonde said, giving Stanley her own smile. “And I told you, call me Jackie. If you don’t, I’m going to call you Stanniel.”

“*Fucking hell*,” Eddie huffed out, twisting toward Stanley so he could bury his face on Stanley’s shoulder. “The moment Richie’s awake, I’m going to make him and this kid do a DNA test to see if they’re related.”

“Then you two can adopt her,” Stanley said, letting out a soft chuckle when Eddie gave him a light punch to his thigh.

“Get fucked, Stanniel.”

“Fucking mature, Eduardo.”

“You guys are the weirdest old men I’ve ever met,” Jackie commented, which prompted the first genuine laughter from the two

Losers since the day they received Audra's phone call.

If Jackie thought they'd completely lost it, well.

She should have known what she'd signed up for.

The moment the last word of the spell left their lips, both men could feel something had happened. In front of them, the huge hole that was now operating as a portal to a different timeline slowly started to glow. It was like a light was suddenly lit at the bottom of the hole before it gradually got bigger, brighter. The two men knew that they'd done it. All that was left for them to do was to jump into the whole, and then, just like the taller one had said, things would be alright again. The thought of sacrificing their lives should have terrified them, but these two had stared at Death in the eyes quite literally for far too many times for it to scare them. They'd lost so much anyway, and they'd known for sometime that when you had nothing to live for, dying didn't seem to be so bad.

"Ready, R-Rich?" the shorter one said, slipping into a stutter for the first time in a year. But, for the first time in years, it was excitement that had brought back his stutter. Excitement at the thought that finally, he was doing something right.

His friend, the taller one, was just as excited when he gave him a cheeky grin and a wink. "I was born ready, Billiam."

And then they jumped.

And their world changed.

("Eddie? Eddie, the light's red already. Eddie. Eddie, what's the matter—

Eddie!”)

(“Hey, are you alright, man? Stanley? Do you need anything?”)

With that one leap into the hole where Pennywise’s Lair was, also known as the Neibolt house, Bill Denbrough and Richie Tozier combined two timelines into one.

Notes for the Chapter:

Leave a comment and tell me what do you think of the story so far, guys :D

3. Surprising Revelation

Summary for the Chapter:

My name's Henry Deaver, and I'm a doctor. A neurologist, to be precise. A year ago, I accidentally got transported into an alternate timeline through a portal in the Castle Rock woods, where I was stuck for twenty-eight years.

"What the fuck kind of name is 'Wahi Hou'?"

"It's Hawaiian, and don't be an asshole, man. This is our only hope."

"Sorry, sorry. You know how I get when I'm nervous."

"It's fine. I get it. Just...stay focus."

"You sure this is going to work though?"

"Not really. But what have we got to lose anyway?"

"Touché. What have we got to lose anyway, when we've lost everything?"

Jackie Torrance was a weird young woman.

The whole ride to her house, she kept on talking with the frequency that would rival Richie's own talkativeness. It took about ten minutes from the hospital to her house, and she spent it talking about either her life and her morbid fascination toward Death that she'd decided to be the sub-topic of the book she was writing—the main topic being alternate timeline. When she told them that she took her nickname from her insane uncle, who was also a writer, it was only then did

Eddie realise that she was related to Jack Torrance. Eddie remembered reading about the man for a school assignment when he was fifteen; about how he tried to kill his wife and son. A part of Eddie grew worried that Jackie could have shared the same murderous tendency with his uncle. Judging from how tense he was, Eddie could tell that Stanley had the same thought. Jackie might not looked the part of a psycho murderer, but Eddie grew up with Beverly, and although she was perfectly sane, no one could deny the fact she was dangerous when given the right provocation.

Once they arrived at Jackie's house, Eddie and Stanley immediately stumbled out of her car. Jackie barely paid them a glance as she locked her car and made her way to the front door. Eddie noticed that the house seemed pretty big, and was a lot bigger than other houses around it. In fact, the house contrasted quite horribly against the beat up taxi he just rode. That fact didn't calm him though, not at all. It was with great hesitation when Eddie could finally move to follow Jackie into the house, dragging a reluctant Stanley behind him. Jackie told them to make themselves at home as she went toward where Eddie suspected was the kitchen. When they settled themselves in the couch in the living room, the first thing Eddie noticed was the stacks of paper and books mounting up on the coffee table in front of him. Beside him, he saw Stanley had walked toward the fireplace and was eyeing something on the wall. It was only until Stanley moved to the side, and Eddie himself went to see what it was from his shoulder, that Eddie realised it was a framed picture.

The picture was of Jackie with a man who looked to be around Jackie's age. He was really good-looking, with sandy-brown hair that fit his pale complexion really well. The picture was a selfie that the man took, and he had his other arm wrapped around Jackie. The both of them was smiling to the camera, the man's face was half hidden in Jackie's hair as he gave it a kiss. Jackie herself face was partly burying her face in the man's chest, one hand clutching the man's shirt in her grip, her mouth pulled into a wide grin that only came when you were laughing. The surrounding around them didn't look to be Castle Rock, and Eddie did spend years in New York to be

able to recognise Central Park during spring time. It was an extremely adorable picture, and despite everything that was happening, Eddie couldn't help it when a smile small tugged on his lips.

"Your boyfriend?" Stanley asked Jackie when the young woman came back with three bottles of beer.

Jackie looked caught off guard at the question, although she recovered quite quick enough. Nodding as she gave Eddie and Stanley the beer, she said, "Yeah, he is. He's actually the reason why I started writing. The reason why I got interested in everything regarding alternate universe in the first place."

"Oh? Why is that? Is he like an expert about it?" Eddie asked, his interest piqued.

The blonde shrugged. "You can say that, I suppose."

"Where is he?" Stanley said, throwing a look around as if Jackie's boyfriend was going to just pop into the room somehow. "Is he home?"

"Nah, he's in New York. He is a doctor, you see? He's about to make a breakthrough creating a cure for Alzheimer. It's for his mum."

"Why don't you come with him then?"

Jackie didn't answer Stanley. Instead, she grabbed a notebook from her bag and spent the next couple of minutes flipping through it, her attention set entirely on it. She only looked back at Eddie and Stanley when she finally found which page she was looking for. "This is Henry's journal. Henry's my boyfriend, by the way. If you want to know about alternate universe, then you can start with this."

She gave the notebook to Eddie. Eddie accepted and scoot closer toward Stanley so they both could read it. The hand-writing looked fairly readable, considering that Henry was a doctor. The entry was dated about a year prior—around the same time when Mike called the Losers, when Richie and Bill went missing. Sharing a look with Stanley, Eddie then quickly read the journal.

I should have done this the moment I got back, but I really couldn't. It was too hard for me to remember everything that had happened in the past twenty-eight years. I always tried to write something, but I never managed to write more than a word. And now, almost seven months after I got home, I'm slowly forgetting everything. And as much as I want to forget it all, I know I can't. Just in case some poor soul suffers the same fate as I did. So, here it goes, I guess. My first entry about my life in the past twenty-eight years in an alternate timeline.

Well, it was twenty-eight years there, and twenty-eight days here. My name's Henry Deaver, and I'm a doctor. A neurologist, to be precise. A year ago, I accidentally got transported into an alternate timeline through a portal in the Castle Rock woods, where I was stuck for

twenty-eight years. I didn't age when I was in that alternate timeline, which was why I looked exactly the same as the day I went missing. Probably because time works differently between the two timelines. During all those years, I was locked up in a forgotten wing in a prison for twenty-seven years before I was released for a few weeks. A cop rescued me. I couldn't remember his name or his face, but he was a nice one. I really didn't mean for him to die in that timeline. But he did, and for that I owed him everything.

In the few weeks I was freed, a lot of things happened. Things that I would rather not say because it was too horrible for me to remember. Those few weeks led me to Jackie though. I remember she was very patient with me then, even though I was practically unresponsive to anything she said. It wasn't that I didn't want to, but more because I couldn't. For some reason, I couldn't communicate the way normal people would. But Jackie didn't mind. In her weird way, she seemed to understand. I guess it's because she has a very interesting view of the world. Jackie is very quirky; so different than my childhood best friend Molly, or my wife. While I wish I'd forgotten everyone from that timeline, even Molly whom I used to care for deeply, Jackie stayed with me. She was always on my mind during the year I spent back locked up.

That was why, a week after the Henry Deaver from that timeline locked me up, I tried to reach out through telepathy to Jackie. You see, anyone who crosses a timeline comes with a gift. It was telepathy for me. I don't think I can do it anymore here, now that I'm home. But over there, the ability was pretty strong, especially when I knew or had seen the person I wanted to establish the mind-link with. It took me around a month, but I managed to send Jackie a message. She took it quite well, didn't freak out like I thought she would. From then on, for almost a year, we communicated through our

minds, planning my escape. I fell in love with her then, even though we'd never really seen each other. And I think, she fell for me too. We agreed that when I went back to my timeline, she would come with me.

The day of my escape, Jackie managed to sneak into the prison to free me. It was the day when Deaver wouldn't be visiting, so we figured that we'd be fine. Jackie had packed everything in her car, and at first, the whole ride to the woods went smoothly. We weren't expecting for anything to go wrong. Our plan was solid; we're going back to my timeline together. But when we reached the woods, we found that Deaver and the whole police squad had waited for us. It turned out that Molly came to visit Jackie, and drove passed us when we stopped at the traffic lights. She called Deaver, and that was it.

They were all heavily armed, and although I knew I could easily defeat them, it would be at the risk of harming Jackie. I could get her killed, like that nice cop. I was ready to surrender, for Jackie's sake, when she decided that we were to close to the freedom we'd planned so hard in the past year. So, against my better judgement, I let Jackie floor the gas, and crashed the car into the barricade of police cars to get to the portal. We had about five minutes of head start because of it, which would have worked if one of our tires weren't shot. We had to pull over and went the rest of the way by foot.

I wouldn't go into details, but just before we crossed the portal, Jackie was shot right in her heart because she tried to protect me by using her body as a shield.

I crossed the portal and got back my freedom, but I lost Jackie.

“Wait, *what?*” Eddie yelped once we both reached the end of the entry, which happened to be the end of the book. “You fucking *died*? What the hell? *How?* I mean, you’re right here!”

“Dude, what part of *alternate timeline* don’t you understand?” Jackie said, sounding annoyed. “The Jackie that died was the Jackie from that timeline. The Jackie from this timeline, who is me, is pretty fucking alive.”

“Let me get this straight,” Stanley said slowly, his brilliant mind probably processing everything. “Did he go to you after he crossed the portal? Because he was madly in love with you?”

Jackie pursed her lips, taking a while to answer. “Not exactly? I mean, he did go looking for me. But apparently, my address here was a bit different than it was in that other timeline. So he got lost. *I* was the one who found him, lying in front of my friend’s real estate building, nearly freezing to death. I took over my friend’s business after she died, although it wasn’t really my primary source of income. I only came once a week, just to make sure that her business kept on running. It was a good thing I decided to come that day, or else Henry would have died.”

“Dying men seem to follow you all the time, huh?” Eddie quipped, earning a jab to his ribs from Stanley. He sent a glare at his friend, but Stanley ignore him.

“What happened then? Did you take care of him? What was his reaction upon seeing you?” Stanley asked. “I suppose things weren’t pretty at first.”

"It wasn't, yeah," Jackie replied, nodding her head. "I had to drag him into the building, strip him out of his wet clothes, and bundled him up in Molly's old blankets that I found in the attic. I knew right away who he was, and I knew I should have brought him to the hospital. Or called for a doctor, at least. But he said my name in his sleep, and I was intrigued. So I stayed and took care of him for the whole day. He woke up when I was having dinner, sitting just three feet away from him. He was a bit dazed, his eyes unfocused. The moment he saw me though, he crawled at an inhuman speed toward me, and practically tackled me in a hug."

"How romantic," Eddie drawled, even though a part of him craved for the day *Richie* would wake up, so he could give that idiot a hug too.

"It was," the blonde said with a dopey smile on her face. "At first, I was a bit hesitant around him. I mean, he didn't seem to be that dangerous, but he's still a man who's around six-foot-four. And was extremely clingy. Like, if I wasn't in his peripheral vision, he would go into hysterics. It was only for a month though. At which point, he was mentally stable enough to tell me what happened to him. He was so afraid that I wouldn't believe him. But I did. *I do*. Freaky, supernatural things happen all the time. Some just don't have the luck to experience it. I tried telling him that he had to write them all down. He wouldn't do it. Not yet. It was too much for him then. That was why, six months later, we did the next best thing to help him recover."

"And that is?" Eddie and Stanley asked in unison.

"We went to New York. So he could go back to his old life. I knew he was married, so when I walked him to his fancy apartment building, I was ready to lose him. I'd fallen for him too, you see. I hugged him

goodbye and left right away because I couldn't stand the thought of his wife greeting him. I didn't go back to Castle Rock though. I didn't want to leave him just yet, not when I knew how much he was still struggling. I stayed in a hotel, and every day I'd come to his apartment to watch him, hoping that he was doing alright. During the third week, I walked right into him when I was going to a café, and he looked so much better already. It was like he'd never spent almost three decades in an alternate timeline where he was treated like the world's worst criminal. I was embarrassed for getting caught, and I tried to leave him right then and there."

"That's just dumb," Stanley said flatly with a frown on his face. "After everything you two have been through, you'd just leave him?"

"That's exactly what he said," Jackie said, and this time there was a fond smile tugging on her lips. "He caught up to me before I could get far enough from him. He's freakishly tall, remember. We had a very intense, very *romantic* argument in the middle of the street because I insisted that I wouldn't fit in his fancy life, especially with his wife being around. Soon I was yelling at him because he wouldn't listen to me, so he snapped and yelled right back at me, saying that he was leaving his wife. For me."

Jackie fell silent as she looked to be reminiscing the past. However, as sweet as her story was, Eddie was impatient. Richie and Bill were still unconscious, and they needed to do something about it.

"And then—"

"*And then*, what happened next, was pretty R rated. Fun times, but I don't think it's something that I need to share with you guys."

“Jesus Christ,” Eddie cursed, glaring at Jackie, who cackled like a maniac. “I’m now a hundred percent convinced that you really are Richie’s long lost daughter.”

“That’s impossible, man,” Jackie instantly countered. “I know you guys look *super old*, but even I have to admit you aren’t that old. You’re like, what? Forty? And I’m only twenty seven. Richie would be thirteen when I was born.”

“Actually, Richie’s forty two. Same goes for Bill. Both of them are the oldest between the seven of us.”

“*Still!* That would make him only fifteen when he had me!”

“Long lost cousin then. I think Maggie Tozier had family in Castle Rock.”

“I didn’t live in Castle Rock when I was a kid. My family only moved there to get away from everything that could connect us to Uncle Jack.”

“Shut it, you two,” Stanley snapped. “Especially you, Eddie. We need to find out what Bill and Richie did, remember? Arguing with the kid wouldn’t help us.”

“A *kid*?” Jackie yelped indignantly. “Excuse me, but I’m *not* a kid.

You're just fourteen years older than me, man. Stop acting so fucking ancient. You already look ugly enough to be a fossil."

Eddie was just about to retort back at her with something positively nasty, when Stanley's phone suddenly rang loudly. Jackie made a remark about the both of them being *so fucking old, Jesus Christ, who the fuck still sets their phone to ring*, but Eddie was barely listening. From where he was, he could see that it was Beverly who called Stanley.

"Yes, Bev?" Stanley said, and Eddie quickly pressed himself closer to his friend so he could listen in.

"They're awake, Stan."

Stanley normally didn't approve of careless driving. He normally hated it when anyone drove above the speed limit. He remembered how Patty often lost her patience because she thought Stanley drove *slower* than her grandmother. And Stanley *had* been driven by dear Nana Blum, so he knew how much of an insult that was. However, the moment he hung up from Beverly, he immediately rushed out of Jackie's house, demanding the blonde to drive him and Eddie back to the hospital as fast she could. He wouldn't admit it to anyone, even many years later, but when Jackie was a little too slow for his liking and the traffic light was almost red, he yelled at her to just *hit it, young lady!* God only knew how many laws they broke, and he really didn't care.

Bill and Richie were his number one priority at the moment. They always had been.

They reached the hospital in what Stanley assumed would be a record time. Both he and Eddie didn't even wait for Jackie to stop the car at the lobby. They'd already jumped out. He vaguely heard Jackie told them that she would see them again the next day, and he merely gave a curt wave of his hand as a response. He ignored the scathing looks the nurses gave him and Eddie when they both ran the whole way to Bill's and Richie's rooms, even though usually he'd be appalled by his own attitude. When they finally got to where Bill and Richie were, he saw that the Losers were all gathered in front of the rooms. Stanley faltered a bit when he saw Audra was there with Beverly, suddenly feeling self-conscious of himself. For the umpteenth time since he woke up to this weird timeline, Stanley was reminded how Bill was *married*, and that his wife still had a huge say on anything that happened to Bill. He was reminded again how essentially, Stanley was no one. Sure, he was Bill's best friend. But the title Audra's title as a *wife* would beat his title by a long a shot.

"Bev!" Eddie yelled, nearly barelling into their redheaded friend when Beverly came to him. "You said that they're awake. Are they okay? Is *he* okay? Can I- can *we* see them?"

"Eddie, I want you to calm down, okay?" Beverly said careful, her tone remarkably gentle as if she was talking to a child. "Whatever I'm going to tell you, please don't freak out."

"Don't say that, Bev," Ben chided as he kindly hugged Eddie, who looked like he *was* going to freak out, hand already searching for his inhaler that was no longer there. "You're putting ideas into his head. And not the good ones, I'm sure."

"I'm sorry," Beverly instantly said as she too wrapped her arms around Eddie. "I just... I want him to be ready. Nothing's bad really happened. To *both* of them. Nothing that we're aware of. They were

in the middle of their doctor's visit when they woke up, fortunately. So far, we only know that Richie's condition is just a bit uglier than Bill's, although I suppose it's understandable. But in general, the doctors said they're doing quite well."

"Can I see him? Please?" Eddie said, his voice small. "Have you guys seen him yet? Will they let me in? Or is it...is it family only?"

"You *are* his family," Mike said firmly. "We all are his family, yes. But you? You've always been Richie's special someone, Eddie. Everyone knows it. That's why we all decide to wait until you're here, because *you* should be the first person who sees Richie. So, go. Get into his room."

Stanley watched Eddie get into Richie's room with a little tug to his heart. He knew he wasn't being a good friend, but he was envious of Eddie's situation. Once he learned of what Eddie really was to his client, Richie's manager, James, immediately changed Richie's emergency contact from his name to Eddie's. They all later found that James might have written Eddie as Richie's *spouse*. The envy Stanley felt was uncalled for, yes, because Richie really had no one else in his family, and the same went for Eddie. But still, Stanley couldn't help himself. He wished he had the same right to see Bill as much as he wanted the way Eddie had that luxury.

"Stan?" Audra said, snapping him out of his reverie. "Stan, do you want to come with me? To see Bill?"

Stanley blinked a few times as he processed Audra's words. "Oh. Um. Maybe I shouldn't. I mean, it's family only, right? And you're his wife."

He should get a fucking award for not spitting out the word 'wife' the way he wanted to do.

"I know how close you two are," Audra replied, a kind smile on her pretty face. "If there's anyone who cares about Bill as much as I do, that would be you. You deserve to be in there with me."

"Yeah, Stan," Beverly said before Stanley could get another word. "Get in there with Audra so we can all have our turn."

It would be easier for him to hate Audra if the woman was just a bit nastier. Unfortunately, she was a good person, so good that she allowed Stanley to come with her to see her newly-woken-up-from-coma husband. He knew then he couldn't object anymore, not when Audra's raised hand toward him looked so inviting. Sighing heavily, Stanley took her hand and let himself be dragged into Bill's room. The doctor was just about to leave, and he gave them a small smile before he left the room. Stanley let Audra to approach Bill first while he stood back beside the door, running his eyes over Bill to make sure that he was alright. Bill still had both of his wrists bandaged, where he somehow managed to transfer Stanley's cuts to himself instead. He was also thinner, much thinner than Stanley knew he should be according to Audra's pictures. But at least he was awake, and *alive*. And that was all that mattered to Stanley, really. When Stanley's eyes finally reached Bill's face, he instantly found that Bill had been eyeing him first. He didn't break the eye contact, even when Audra leaned over him to give him a kiss. Stanley felt awkward under Bill's scrutiny, but he really couldn't look away. He'd missed those eyes. He'd missed Bill. So, *so much*.

"I'm so glad you're finally awake," Audra said softly, one hand

clasped around Bill's own hand. "I missed you, Bill. How are you, love? Do you need anything?"

"I'm fine," Bill replied without taking his eyes off Stanley. "Just a bit dizzy. Probably from all the medication I have."

It didn't take Audra long to realise where her husband's eyes had been focused on. When the woman gave an understanding smile, Stanley really wished that she was as horrible as Eddie's ex-wife Myra.

"I asked Stanley to come with me," she explained, which finally gained at least half of Bill's attention. "When I first reported you as missing, Stanley was the first one to reach out to me, you know? The others told me how close you two were. Practically brothers."

Pfft, brothers, a little voice scoffed in Stanley's head. A voice that sounded a lot like Richie. *If only that was true, innit, Stan?*

Shut up, brain, Stanley snapped to his own mind.

"Fucking talking to myself," he muttered under his breath. "I'm officially a nutter."

"What's that, Stan?" Audra said.

Stanley gave her a small smile and shook his head. "It's nothing. Don't worry about it."

She didn't seem to believe him, but she let it go. Turning back to Bill, she continued their almost one-sided conversation. "Stanley here has been a great help. He's always there for me more than anyone else did. I didn't think I could have managed so well without him. I mean, you were gone for a long time, love. Did...did the doctor tell you how long you were missing?"

"Yeah," Bill said after a beat. "He said I was gone for a year. No one knew where I was, or what had happened to me."

Audra nodded. "The last time we truly talked was after Peter told me to tell you to rewrite your script. Then you had that phone call? Which turned out to be from Mike. You instantly left the set, after only telling Peter's assistant that you had some family emergency. And uh, that was the last time anyone saw you until...until you were found here a year later."

"I see..." The writer trailed off, and once again, his eyes blue eyes found Stanley's brown ones. "And how did they find me?"

"Someone found you, in the middle of the forest here in Castle Rock. You were bleeding to death from the cuts on your wrists. And um, you weren't alone. Richie was there with you too, and he was hurt even worse. He had a cut to his cheek, and a gaping whole on his chest that missed his heart just by inches. Diane – she's the one who found you, Diane Torrance – found you, and she recognised you because she's—"

"It's Jackie," Stanley muttered, not realising he'd done that until he felt both Bill's and Audra's eyes on him. Sheepishly, he said, "Sorry."

It's just, the kid preferred to be called Jackie. From her uncle's name. You know what? Don't mind me. You can continue, Audra. Sorry for the interruption."

The woman shrugged. "It's fine... Anyway, Jackie recognised you because she's a fan. She didn't know it was Richie though. She then immediately contacted me, saying that she found you and someone whose descriptions matched Richie. I called Richie's manager, because he's Richie's emergency contact and the one who reported that he's been missing too. Then we both went here to identify you and Richie. Once we were sure it was you two, we called the rest of the Losers. They arrived here just hours after we did. And that was it, really."

Bill nodded. "Alright."

He fell quiet then, an unreadable look on his face even as he kept his eyes on Stanley. The silence went for sometime, with Stanley growing more restless as seconds passed. He could tell that Audra felt just uncomfortable as he was, but both of them dared not to break the silence, understanding that Bill probably needed sometime to process everything. It wasn't easy though. It was true, because of his stutter, Bill had never been a talkative person. Even when he was with Stanley, who preferred the silence more often than not and was always the one who readily waited for Bill to finish his sentences, Bill chose to listen to Stanley talk instead. But now, his lack of participation in the conversation was unsettling for Stanley. Usually, even when they weren't talking for sometime, at least the silence wasn't wrought with tension. That was why when Bill finally spoke, Stanley had to fight hard the urge to whoop childishly like Richie would have done.

"Audra?" Bill began, sounding a bit unsure. Stanley weirdly noticed

for the first time since he entered the room, Bill hadn't stuttered at all.

"Yes, Bill?" Audra replied. She held Bill's hand, and Stanley wished it was *him* who was holding Bill's hand and gently caressing his knuckles.

"Can you leave me to talk with Stanley for a while? It won't be long, I promise. I just... There's just something we need to talk about."

Audra looked like Bill had yelled at her to leave instead of asking nicely. It made Stanley feel bad that Bill had chosen *him* to talk about whatever it was that had been bothering him, and not Audra—his *wife*. He would have said something, probably tell Bill that he was alright if Audra was in the room, listening to whatever Bill wanted to talk about. But Stanley was selfish. He always was. He had always been selfish when it came to Bill. That was something he and Eddie had in common, except it was Richie for Eddie. So, Stanley kept quiet, even when he felt Audra staring hard at him. It felt like she was wordlessly demanding him to repay the kindness she'd given him. He pretended not to notice that. But at least, he had the decency to lower his head and keep his eyes on the patterns on the floor. In the end, Audra seemed to realise that neither Bill nor Stanley were backing down, and that she had no choice but to oblige.

"Alright," she said, her voice broke a little at the last syllable. "I'll be waiting outside, okay?"

"Thank you," Bill said, sounding grateful. Stanley still avoided looking at the two Denbroughs, but he could hear them when they kissed. A part of him knew that he had it coming, so he dutifully stepped aside for Audra when she left the room, keeping his emotions

in control.

The door closed behind Audra gently, but it felt like she'd slammed it closed instead.

"Will you come closer?" Bill said in that quiet voice he always had when he was nervous. His hand twitched awkwardly before he patted the spot beside him, a little unsure. "Come sit here, S-Stan."

Ah, that's the stutter we all love and miss.

"What's wrong, Bill?" Stanley asked once he took a seat right by Bill's right thigh, careful not to jostle him too much. "Anything I can help you with?"

"*Everything*," Bill whispered, as the front he'd kept up in front of Audra slowly fell apart. He surprised Stanley when he gripped Stanley's left hand tightly, almost crushing his fingers. "Oh, *God*, I need help."

Alarmed, Stanley leaned closer and cupped Bill's face with his free hand in an effort to keep him calm despite the up coming panic attack. "Bill. Bill, tell me what's wrong. You know you can tell me everything, right? *Breathe*, and then tell me what's wrong. Come on, do it with me."

Helping Bill with his breathing reminded Stanley of another time when Bill had a panic attack. It was around a month after Georgie went missing. The position was almost the same; with Bill lying on a

bed because Georgie's disappearance had sent him into a crippling depression that kept him on his bed, and Stanley sitting beside him with one hand holding Bill's own hand while his other hand had found its way to the back of Bill's head. Stanley had used the hand on Bill's head to pull him closer back then too, so close that their foreheads were touching and they were sharing their breaths. For a moment, he could almost see them as they were back when they were kids. He had no idea how long they'd spent in that position. But Bill had grown calmer, so he ignored the way his heart fluttered in his chest as if he was still a teenager.

"Feeling better?" Stanley asked.

"Not really," Bill replied truthfully.

"It's okay. It's better than not at all, at least." Stanley tried pull back a little, but Bill's grip around his hand tightened, and his head fell to the side and landed on the crook of Stanley's neck. If he wasn't used to it, Stanley would have jerked back in surprise. But this was familiar to him, to the both of them. So he wrapped the arm that Bill wasn't clinging onto, and pulled his friend even closer. "You can tell me whenever you're ready. I promise, whatever it is, I'll try my best to help. You know me. There's *nothing* I won't do for you, Bill."

Bill let out a wet, broken laugh as he buried himself even deeper into Stan. "I think that's the problem, Stanley. I think that's the f-fucking problem."

"What do you mean?" When Bill didn't answer him and start to cry instead, Stanley had no choice but to pull Bill off him a bit so he could look into his friend. Brown eyes into blue ones. "Bill? Hey, talk to me. You know me, Bill. You can trust me. Whatever it is, I will—"

"I don't know you," Bill said with a wince, almost as if those words pained him physically. And it made Stanley froze, albeit the way his heart was beating madly against his ribs.

"Bill, what do you—"

"I don't know who you are, Stan," the writer said once again, firmer this time, sadder too. "I don't— I *can't* remember you. I can't even remember *me*. I don't even know who I am."

Silence. There was a long, unbearable silence as Stanley slowly processed his friend's words. Bill. His best friend. The boy he'd fallen in love with when they were twelve. The man he'd continued to love even though he'd forgotten him and had gotten married. The love of his life whom Stanley would sacrifice *everything* as long as he was happy.

Bill Denbrough, who didn't even know who he was, let alone Stanley Uris.

He knew he shouldn't have done it, but Stanley *needed* the confirmation. So, he made the decision to ask him. Even though he knew the question would hurt him. Words began to form at the tip of his tongue, the question ready to cement the horrible truth that would change their lives forever. But before Stanley could even make a sound, he heard Eddie's voice screaming for him, the same way Stanley had called out for him when he first saw Bill. There was the sound of a door slamming, and then *Richie's* familiar voice, crying out for Eddie to *please, come back!* Stanley was just about to get off Bill's bed and make his way toward the door, so he could see what had

happened, when the ground under him trembled. *Earthquake!* His mind instantly warned him. Panic began to build in him, especially when he heard people started to scream, because he knew there was no way he could take Bill to safety in time. Lights began to flicker around them, and there was a terrifying groaning sound that came from the building's construction, alerting Stanley that the hospital was going to crumble.

"Stanley, get back here," Bill said, hand outstretched forward toward Stanley.

"I'm sorry," Stanley said, quickly returning to his friend's side. He pulled Bill closer to him, nearly pulling him onto his lap as he curled around him protectively. "I'm sorry, Bill. But I don't think we can get out of here."

He felt Bill gripped his bicep in an assuring manner. When he spoke, he sounded confident, unlike the broken mess that he was just moments prior. "Don't worry, Stan. We'll be fine. I'll make sure of that. You'll see. *I've got you.*"

"Bill—"

The ceiling above them collapsed, cutting Stanley's mid-sentence. He didn't even have time to scream when he felt Bill snake a hand between them while his other hand was wrapped tightly around Stanley, in a manner that was just as protective as the way Stanley curled around him. When he saw the tons of debris headed toward them, Stanley closed his eyes automatically, and sent a quick prayer to a God he'd long forgotten for a painless death. Then suddenly, everything *stopped*. There was no more screaming from people, no grumbling sound from the collapsing building around them

“You can open your eyes now, Stan,” Bill said softly to his ears, his lips brushing Stanley’s ears softly.

The curly-haired accountant was ready to see all kinds of horrible things when he was told to open his eyes. From his friends’ dead bodies lying around him, to the return of that fucking clown. Whatever he had prepared himself to see, Stanley was still incredibly shocked to find what he saw instead.

Both him and Bill were still clinging onto each other, and there was a sphere-shaped force field around them, the kind he’d seen from superhero movies, that seemed to come from Bill’s opened palm. All around them, Stanley saw debris from walls and the ceiling were hovering in the air, and slowly began to form the hospital back into its glory. In front of him, where the wall that separated Bill’s and Richie’s room had collapsed and was now rebuilding itself, Stanley could see that *Richie* had both of his hands out, opened palms slowly closing at the same time as the debris’ movement to build the wall. When everything was finally back to what it was, the wall between Bill’s and Richie’s room was restored to its position, realisation dawned on Stanley about what the *hell* had just happened.

(You see, anyone who crosses a timeline comes with a gift.)

Ben barged into the room right then, white as a sheet as his whole body shook like a leaf. Behind him, Stanley could see an equally shocked Mike had his arms protectively around Beverly and Audra, using his massive build to protect the women from possible harm.

“It seems,” Stanley began slowly, cutting off whatever Ben was going

to say. "We'll need to have another Losers' meeting to discuss what the fuck just happened."

"Why don't you hate me, Rich? Why don't you ever hate me?"

"Why would I? Because of Eddie?"

"Yeah. Everyone knows that if you had to choose between saving me or Eddie, you'd choose Eddie all the time. And you did, remember? Back when we first fought IT."

"I was a child then. And come on; you know that Eddie saw you like the big brother he never had. All of us did, really. He idolised you. If he decided he wanted to be there for you, then all I could do was to be there for him. To protect him."

"It's still my fault then. He wouldn't have gotten involved with this whole Pennywise bullshit if it weren't for me. If I hadn't brought all for you into the sewer that first time."

"Bill, shut the fuck up. Stop blaming yourself. You know we'd still go after you, man. You're our idiotic leader, and we love you. We'd follow you till the end of times. We always would."

"But—"

"Eddie's death destroyed me, and every day I live without him, I feel like dying. You can see that it's literally killing me. He died because he saved me. Because I was stupid enough to get caught in the Deadlights. And I knew what would happen to him. I saw it. But I wasn't quick enough to save him. And I'm going to live the rest of my life with the knowledge that I'd failed to save him. If anyone was to blame for Eddie's death, then it would be me."

And he did. All he had ever wanted was to protect Eddie. Yet in the end, he'd failed.

Eddie had died. Richie had lived.

There was never a day went by without Richie wishing that his friends had left him down in that fucking sewer with Eddie.

"We'll fix this, Rich. I promise, we'll fix this. We'll bring them back."

"I know, Bill. I know we will. I trust you. I always do."

Notes for the Chapter:

Leave a comment and tell me what do you think of the story so far, guys :D

4. Consequences

Summary for the Chapter:

The moment Eddie got into Richie's room, he felt like crying again, even though he was pretty sure he'd run out of tears by then. Seeing Richie's skeletal and wasted figure broke Eddie's heart into pieces, and he couldn't help but to wonder for the umpteenth time how difficult life had been for Richie after Eddie's and Stanley's supposed deaths.

Notes for the Chapter:

I don't really like this chapter, to be honest. I tried to rewrite it a few times, but it always turned out bad. But I need to update soon, I suppose. So, here goes. I hope it's not too bad.

“Hey, Bill?”

“Yeah?”

“Do you think there’ll be like, side effects?”

“Side effects?”

“Yeah, I just want to be prepared if I have to lose an arm. Or gain an extra one.”

“Uh, I don’t think so? I mean, it’s not mentioned here.”

“Fucking— That’s just...wow. Great. How wonderful. Not only the plan might not work, but there’s a chance we could turn into frogs. Fucking amazing. This is why we have Eds and Stanny. No offense, but you and I are fucking shit at this, Bill.”

"Nah, none taken. You're a hundred percent right. We need them to stop us from destroying the world with our stupid plans."

"Hear that, God? You better help us bring them back if you don't want us two fuck-ups to fuck up your beloved world."

The moment Eddie got into Richie's room, he felt like crying again, even though he was pretty sure he'd run out of tears by then. Seeing Richie's skeletal and wasted figure broke Eddie's heart into pieces, and he couldn't help but to wonder for the umpteenth time how difficult life had been for Richie after Eddie's and Stanley's supposed deaths. But he tried to reign in his tears, especially when his eyes landed on Richie's own light-blue ones. Eddie saw something unfamiliar flashed in those eyes, something he couldn't determine. He didn't like it though. He didn't like that look in Richie's eyes. It looked...sad. *Richie* looked sad. And Eddie hated it whenever his friend didn't have that trademark grin on his face. So, he forced a smile on his face, and made his way closer to Richie's side before taking a seat on the chair by his bedside.

"Hey, Chee," Eddie greeted, voice breaking a bit at Richie's name. "How are you feeling?"

"It hurts," Richie replied, uncharacteristically soft and timid. "My whole body hurts. The area around my chest is especially painful."

Something was *wrong*. Eddie could tell right away that something was wrong. He just couldn't determine what it was. Yet.

"I'm sorry," Eddie said, reaching out to touch Richie's long-fingered hand, and was grateful when the man didn't pull back. "I'm sorry that

you're hurting."

Richie made a move that was probably meant to be a shrug. But obviously it upset his wound, so he stopped in the middle of the gesture. "It's not your fault. From what the doctor told me, you weren't around when it happened. You weren't even the one who found me."

There it was again. Whatever it was that was off, Eddie knew it was important. Important and monumentally wrong. And he was slowly figuring it out too.

"Well, if you put it that way..." Eddie trailed off, letting out a heavy sigh. "Do you know what happened to you? Did anyone tell you about it?"

"Just that I was found half-dead in the woods after disappearing for a year. The uh, the doctor didn't think I should upset myself thinking about it. Not right now, at least, when I only woke up recently."

"Ah, I see. How very considerate of them."

"Yeah. I guess."

Silence fell between them. Eddie fidgeted in his seat, the hand that was holding Richie's was toying with his longer fingers. He remembered doing this when they were children. Whenever Eddie was scared or anxious, Richie would take his hand and let Eddie hold

it for as long as he needed. Sometimes, even when he was feeling much better already, Eddie would keep holding on to it because he liked how the weight of Richie's hand grounded him, how the warmth coming from those fingers made him felt safe. He was lost in his memories of his childhood with Richie for quite a while, until the man himself broke the silence, his voice was still weirdly soft and timid, almost like he was shy.

And Richie Tozier was *never* shy.

"Do you know what *really* happened to me?" Richie asked. "Because when the doctor asked for you, I heard the woman with red hair told him that you were gone to find out what had happened to me..."

The curly-haired comedian kept on talking, but Eddie had tuned out as his mind zeroed in on something that Richie had said—*the woman with red hair*.

Richie loved to give nicknames to everyone. Every single one of the Losers had at least two. The original Losers had the honour to have five. Out of the seven of them though, Beverly was the only whose name was remotely decent. Richie's favourite name for her was Molly Ringwald.

Not 'the woman with the red hair'.

("I'm sorry, but who invited Molly Ringwald into the group? ")

And that was when everything made sense, that weird feeling he felt about Richie.

"Why haven't you called me Eds?" Eddie said instead of answering his friend, interrupting him in the middle of his explanation.

Richie blinked once, Eddie's question caught him off guard. "I'm sorry?"

"You haven't, not even *once*, called me by those petty nicknames you've given me when we were kids," Eddie replied, his heart was thundering in his chest as he grew more agitated. "You always called me Eds, or Eduardo, or Eddie Spaghetti, or Spaghedward. Hell, you haven't even said *my name* once."

Blue eyes widened in epic proportion as Richie stammered, "Well, um... I uh... Okay. I mean, what do you want—"

"Richie," Eddie began slowly, cutting the man mid-sentence. "Richie, do you even know who I am?"

Please, please, please. Let me be wrong. Let me be wrong. Let me—

"Edward?"

Eddie had been stabbed more times than a normal person had in their one lifetime. But nothing could ever prepare him to the crippling pain he felt at the realisation that Richie had forgotten him.

That Richie, his best friend, the love of his life, had no idea who he was.

“*Oh, Richie,*” Eddie choked out, burying his face against their joined hands as he felt his heart broke for the umpteenth time. “What *have* you done?”

“I don’t—” Eddie heard the way Richie’s voice trembled, and it was so, *so sad* that despite how much it *hurt* to look at Richie and be treated as if they were strangers, he had no choice.

Just like Richie lived to make sure Eddie was alright, the same thing applied to Eddie when it came to the curly-haired idiot.

“Hey, hey, hey,” Eddie whispered, wrapping Richie with his arms in hopes that it would calm him down. “It’s fine. It’s not your fault. We’ll figure this out, okay? You know you can do this. You’re Richie ‘Trashmouth’ Tozier, for fuck’s sake!”

Richie laughed, but it was dry and devoid of his usual humour. “That’s very nice of you, Edwa— *Eds. Fuck.* It’s just... I’m afraid we have a bit of a problem.”

“What is it, Rich?” Eddie pulled back a little so they could look at each other while they talked. “And you can call me Eddie. If you don’t feel like using the nicknames yet.”

“I think...” Richie faltered a bit here, his breath quickening again. But he took control of his nerves rather quick at the gentle kiss Eddie unconsciously pressed to his hair. Heaving deeply as if to brace himself for the worse, Richie said, “I think you’ll have to tell me about myself, Eddie.”

Eddie froze. It was one thing if Richie couldn’t remember Eddie. But for Richie to forget *himself*...

“Are you saying—“

Richie made a timid nod. “I don’t know who I am. I don’t think I’d have known what my name was if the doctor hadn’t called me by it. I tried to remember, I really did. But I couldn’t come up with anything. And the more I tried, the more it escaped me—my memories. A-and I think there’s something *wrong* with me. I can feel it. I can feel the *restlessness* of it under my skin. It feels... It feels like I *need* to get it out. Like, I have to let lose of my control of it, even though I don’t know what—“

“Richie, calm down,” Eddie said in a quiet voice not unlike the one people would use on scared animals, lest he’d frighten them—lest he’d frighten *Richie*.

Because, right at that moment, he could feel what Richie was talking about. A slight tremble beneath his feet, the small movement of the objects around him, the way his hand *burnt* the longer he kept it on Richie’s skin. Eddie was sure he only took his eyes off Richie for a moment, to watch the waver of the glass on the window grew stronger. He was certain that in the second he took to eye the window, nothing horrific could have happened. But when he turned back to look at Richie, he was proven wrong, for something was

definitely wrong with Richie. Something was definitely wrong with his best friend, because no matter how fucking blue Richie's eyes were, they weren't supposed to *fucking glow, for fuck's sake!*

"Eddie?" Richie whimpered when Eddie let go of his hand abruptly. "Eddie, what's wrong?"

"I- I don't know, Rich," Eddie stammered, his heartbeat picking up when the glowing in Richie's eyes got brighter. "Don't freak out, though, alright? I promise I'll help you with whatever this is—"

Richie groaned in pain then as he held his head in his hand. And much to Eddie's utmost dismay, he saw the windows shook harder. "God, it *hurts*, Eddie. My head— *fuck, what is wrong with me?*"

"Richie—"

"It's so *loud* in there. They won't stop talking. S-shut up, you *assholes!*"

"Fucking hell..."

"And who the *fuck* is Georgie?"

(You see, anyone who crosses a timeline comes with a gift.)

"Shit," Eddie breathed. "What the— *did you say Georgie?*"

“Yeeesss,” Richie hissed out, still holding his head. It was a while when he could finally look back at Eddie again, face scrunching up in pain as he gritted out, “Eddie, help me, *please*.”

“I promise, I’ll help you,” Eddie said, patting Richie’s knee before he backed away toward the door. “But, I’ll have to go get Stanley—*our Stan*. He’ll...he’ll know what to do, Rich. He always does—STAN!”

The way Richie’s eyes widened as Eddie stepped further away from him felt like a knife to Eddie’s heart. “No, no, no, no, no, no. Eddie. Eddie, don’t leave me. *Please*. Come back.”

“I’m not leaving you, Rich. I just— we need help. I can’t— *we* can’t do this alone.”

“Don’t leave. Eddie. Eddie, you promised. *You fucking promised!*”

“I know! I’ll be right back. You won’t even notice—STANLEY, GODDAMMIT!”

“*NO! Eddie! Eddie, please come back!*”

Eddie didn’t even realise it when he’d accidentally slammed the door opened in his haste. Not until he saw how the sound surprised his friends, how they jumped in their seats. Eddie was barely out of Richie’s room when the ground shuddered again. This time, it was a

lot stronger, and got even worse in no time. He heard people started to scream, heard his friends calling out for his name. He saw the walls around him began to crack from the force of the earthquake. From the corner of his eyes, he saw Ben and Beverly huddled together in their seats, while Mike had Audra wrapped protectively in his arms. If things were different, Eddie would have probably dragged them to go under a table for safety. But at that moment, all he could think about was *Richie*, who was screaming in his room while the hospital seemed to slowly break apart. Ignoring his friends, Eddie immediately ran back into the room, hoping that Richie would be alright.

“Richie—“

“*Eddie, look out!*”

He was only halfway back inside Richie’s room when Ben yelled out his warning. Eddie only had a split second to look up at where Ben was pointing, and saw how the ceiling was coming down on him. Everything felt like it was going in a slow motion then. It was almost like an out of body experience for him. He could see the ceiling broke apart before it fell, and he closed his eyes as he thanked whatever deity in charge of his fate that if he were to die that die, at least he got to meet Richie one last time. Hell, he even got to die *with Richie*. He was bracing himself for the weight of the tons of concrete that would flatten him into a pulp, but it never came. He waited for an extra second, but death still didn’t come for him. At the sound Richie’s pained grunt, Eddie’s eyes flew opened right that instance, searching for Richie’s figure frantically, wishing with all his might that the other man wasn’t hurt. It took Eddie a full five seconds to process what he was seeing then.

Richie. Face twisted in both pain and concentration. Restoring the

destruction that he might have caused. All through the gestures he made with his hands.

And just right on Eddie's left, before Richie could put back the wall that separated his room and Bill's, Eddie saw Bill and Stanley holding onto one another, a kind of force-field that seemed to come from *Bill's extended hand* protectively surrounded them in a bubble. The wall closed up before Eddie could confront either Bill or Stanley though, so he decided that he'd have to check on them later. He turned to look at Richie, words already at the tip of his tongue, ready to ask him what hell was that about. They faltered though, the moment he saw how Richie swayed on his feet, breathing laboured as his eyes started to drop. Eddie was barely quick enough to scramble forward to catch Richie before the man could fall onto his face. As he half craddled Richie's upper body on his lap, he distinctly heard his friends talking loudly outside. It was only a few seconds later when Beverly came into the room, her pretty face pale as a sheet.

"Hey, Bev," Eddie greeted awkwardly, feeling drained all of the sudden. The fact that Beverly hardly noticed the absurdity of his greeting proved him how shocked she was.

"Are you alright?" Beverly said, dropping beside him the moment her eyes zeroed in on him and Richie.

Eddie nodded, only half-heartedly shrugging away Beverly's hands off him. "I'm fine, Bev. I really am. Trust me."

"And Richie?" she said, turning her attention on their lanky friend. "Is he okay? *Will* he be okay?"

"I really don't know. I think... I think it's a bit different for him."

There was a beat of silence before she continued. "Did he.... I mean, was that *him*? Was it Richie who just did that?"

Eddie slowly nodded, heaving deeply. "I'm afraid so. I don't know how much you saw, but..."

"I saw everything," Beverly answered when Eddie faltered. "We all did. The Losers and Audra."

"Well, then you know it's him."

"But *how* though? How could he possibly do that? That's some X-Men comic type of bull—"

"Same way as Bill's force-field, I imagine."

Eddie and Beverly simultaneously turned toward Stanley's voice, and found the man was standing by the door with a pale but determined Bill holding onto him. The two of them got into the room with the rest of the Losers and Audra following behind them. Once everyone was inside, Mike closed the door and made sure it was locked. Then everyone settled into a circle surrounding Eddie and Richie. Stanley sat right next to Eddie, carefully lowering himself and Bill onto the ground. With one hand kept around Bill, Stanley's free hand instantly reached for Richie's hand, holding it tightly in his. The familiarity of the gesture made it felt as if they were still ten years

old, way back when there were still only four of them, before everything changed for the worst. Beside Bill, Audra took her seat, her eyes resolutely avoiding the sight of her husband practically sitting on said husband's lap. It was Beverly next, then Ben, and lastly it was Mike who sat on Eddie's other side. Ben was kind enough to pull Richie's long legs onto his lap before his fingers started to tap some weird rhythm onto Richie's bare feet. Eddie was transfixed by the way Ben's hand moved that it took Stanley saying his name twice to get his attention.

"Sorry. What is it, Stan?" Eddie asked.

Judging from the way Stanley looked at him long and hard, it didn't take Eddie too long to figure out what the man had in mind.

"I think," Stanley said after he took a deep breath to brace himself. "I think we have to tell them everything, Eddie."

It was ironically difficult to convince his friends of the truth. Considering that they'd dealt with weird, supernatural bullshit since they were thirteen, he'd expected them to believe his and Eddie's story right away. They did try to explain it as detailed as they possibly could, starting from the moment they woke up on their way to Castle Rock, to their conversation with Jackie Torrance, and lastly to their theory of what had happened to Bill and Richie. But it turned out they were as stubborn as ever. The part that his friends really had trouble accepting was that Bill and Richie had forgotten them somehow. After the second time he'd retold the story, Stanley had resorted to just let Eddie do all the talking. He'd gone to sit across Audra, on the foot of Bill's bed that Ben and Mike dragged from Bill's room and into Richie's, much to the utter dismay of the doctors and nurses. No one cared though. Bill and Richie still needed much rest to recover, and they needed their own respective beds to do it. Fortunately, all of the hospital staff said nothing about it either,

seeing they were more worried about the fact that an earthquake so strong was just about to tear the building down before it *magically* repaired itself.

Stanley briefly wondered whether the hospital staff noticed about Bill's and Richie's special *abilities*, but the thought soon flew out of his mind because Bill chose that moment to just drop unconscious in Stanley's arms. He quickly lay the man on his bed, which Ben and Mike had pushed together with Richie's bed to make more room. The bed was pushed closely together that both men ended up sleeping right next to each other. Stanley then quietly settled himself on the bed, sitting right across Audra, the whole time avoiding her eyes. He was half tuning out from his friends' discussion when he noticed how Bill's and Richie's fingers were touching. For some reason, he knew it had something to do with the way both of them breathed simultaneously. He glanced at Eddie, who was sat gingerly at Richie's side, fingers absent-mindedly playing with the now-short strands of Richie's curls as he listened to Beverly's newest argumentation with a scowl on his face. Stanley wondered whether Eddie had realised the same thing. Lately, Stanley and Eddie had become in tune with each other's thoughts, which brought them even closer. However, the shorter man was too busy arguing their thick-headed friends to pay attention to his surrounding.

"For fuck's sake!" Eddie exclaimed impatiently, snapping Stanley out of his reverie. "What else do we have to say to make you fuckers believe us? We're wasting time we better use to figure out what's wrong with Richie and Bill!"

"It's not that we don't believe you, Eddie," Beverly said patiently in a tone Stanley often heard Patty used on her young nephews and nieces. "But we have to make sure that this is not It. If Bill were here, he'd agree that we need to be—"

"Bill is right here, Bev," Stanley said quietly, his tone had a cold edge to it. "And no. This doesn't feel like the clown."

Beverly shut up immediately. She looked guilty and embarrassed, her face flushing almost as red as her hair. But Stanley had had enough. It was his turn to talk.

"Stan, you know that—"

"I know, Bev. Everyone knows that. But you forgot, whenever either one of us were in danger, because of It or Henry Bowers, both Bill and Richie would never hesitate to rush in head first to our rescue. Whatever the consequences were, they would never hesitate to help us. So, can you please, for their sake, just stop questioning us? I honestly wouldn't have cared if Bill's and Richie's lives weren't on the line. I don't give a fuck if you think we're high or whatever. Unfortunately, their lives were on the line, so I have no choice but to beg you idiots to believe me and Eddie."

"You're right," Mike took over then. "Arguing would get us nowhere. Let's just continue then. Stan, Eddie, do you think we can trust this Jackie?"

"Yeah," Eddie surprisingly answered without hesitation. "The kid seemed trust-worthy. I mean, you couldn't create a lie that extensive."

"But she's a writer," Ben quipped, a little sheepish for his logical input. "Are you really sure that she won't be able to come up with something like this?"

"But for what?" Audra said, making a sound for the first time since she joined the Losers in Richie's room. "What would she gain from lying? If you ask me, I think she's a pretty good girl. She didn't even want to take the reward I offered her for finding Bill. I say we trust her."

"Uh, thanks, Audra," Eddie said, flashing a grateful smile toward her, which she replied with a smile of her own.

"We're in the same position. I know you'd do the same for me. Or at least, for Richie," the actress replied. There was so much love in her eyes when she looked at Bill, Stanley could almost feel it.

And he couldn't take it. It was times like this when he missed Richie's humour the most. No matter how crude and juvenile Richie's jokes were, Stanley always appreciated them because it always made him loosened up. As it was though, his best friend was a bit indisposed, so he took matters to his own, and said the very first joke he could come up with.

"Jackie would have been so pleased to know how much you like her, Edward," Stanley said. He was immensely relief when Eddie took the bait, glaring at him with an intensity that was just a bit less than what he usually gave Richie.

"Shut the fuck up, Stan," Eddie snapped, the scowl on his face prompted a small grin from Stanley. "Just because I trust her, it doesn't change the fact that she's fucking annoying."

“She reminds you of Richie, that’s why.”

“Ah, I see,” Mike quipped, sharing a discreet grin with Ben and Beverly, who chuckled in response. This didn’t escape Eddie though.

“What the fuck does that mean, Hanlon? What’s wrong with that?”

Mike shrugged, although there was still a grin on his face. “Nothing, man. Nothing wrong with that.”

“Bullshit! You were an awful liar then, Mike, and you’re an awful liar still.” Eddie’s face scrunched up in anger but instead of it making him looked menacing, it made him looked like an angry chihuahua, and that made the Losers all laughed. Eddie, obviously, didn’t appreciate it. “*Stop it*. Fuck. Don’t fucking laugh, assholes!”

*(Stanley could almost hear the familiar **cute cute cute!**)*

Beverly was the first one to oblige, even if she still had a bit of a chuckle when she spoke. “Eddie, honey, we’ll tell you but promise you won’t yell at us again, okay?”

Eddie rolled his eyes in annoyance, his hands crossed in front of his chest. “*Fine*. I promise. Now, tell me what the fuck were you fuckers laughing about?”

“It’s just,” Ben began, a giggle escaped him once before he continued.

“So like you to find someone who’s like a mini-Richie. I mean, the man’s like one of a kind. And you managed to find someone who reminds you of him.”

Eddie’s face flushed then, and it took everything in Stanley’s power not to laugh again. The shorter man ran a hand through his hair awkwardly in an obvious attempt to look as if he wasn’t bothered. “Well, she’s not *exactly* like Richie. There’s a significant lack of ‘your mum’ jokes. Which she replaced with a worrying obsession towards death. Honestly, the kid’s pretty fucked up.”

“So, we agree that we can trust Jackie,” Mike quickly said before anyone else could reply Eddie with another joke. “Did she mention when she’d talk to you guys again?”

Stanley shook his head, a little sheepishly. “Nah, she only said that she’d see us tomorrow. Honestly, talking to her again was the last thing I had in mind then.”

He made it a point *not* to look at Audra.

“Do you guys have her number?” Beverly asked.

“No—“

“I do,” Audra said, cutting off Eddie. “She called me, remember? I can give you guys her number so you can call her. Is it alright if I just give it to you, Stan?”

The question caught the accountant off his guard. He nodded his head quickly though. “Uh, okay. Thanks, Adura.”

“That settles it then,” Beverly said. “Stan will call the kid to meet up. In the mean time, don’t we have something else to talk about?”

“And that is?” Ben asked.

Stanley truly didn’t like the serious on Beverly’s face. The woman probably wasn’t as much of a joker as Richie was. But she never had that look on her face. One thing Stanley always remembered from her was the constant cheeky smile and mischievous glint in her eyes. A serious Beverly meant that there was some serious shit they had to deal with. And when Beverly finally spoke, Stanley’s suspicion was confirmed.

“What are we going to do once people find out about our resident super heroes?”

“Jackie Torrance speaking. Who’s this?”

“Uh, Diane? It’s um...it’s Dan. Your cousin.”

“Huh. Well, hello, cous. What’s up? Do you need anything?”

“Not exactly. I think, you’re the one who needs help. Or at least, your new friends do.”

Notes for the Chapter:

Leave me a comment and tell me what do you think so far, guys! :D

Author's Note:

I'm ofqueensandwiches on tumblr!